

INSIDE: A NEW YEAR₀₃ WINTER'S WRATH₀₈

the **REACTer** winter2014

2014



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snapshot



WINTER DEEP FREEZE: A satellite image captured on January 2, 2014, depicting an ongoing blizzard across portions of the Ohio River Valley and the Northeast United States as cold air from Canada moves across warm air from the Gulf of Mexico.

Image Courtesy of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, via Wikimedia Commons



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2014

A NEW YEAR: We asked the RI directors to put together a short update for you on what's going on in each region and what we can expect for 2014. Here's what they had to say:

REGION 2

Tom Currie *Region 2 Director*

Much of Region 2 has been busy digging out from the snow storms that have hit our area harder than usual this winter. Much like RI, the Maryland Council is considering ways to update their bylaws, a process that will undoubtedly take some time to develop and implement.

It looks like we may be getting back one of the teams that we lost in 2013. Hopefully everyone will have at least their initial renewals completed by the time this issue of *the REACTer* is published.



REGION 3

Roy Drury *Region 3 Director*

Hello and welcome to all to another new year for REACT. Things are fairly quiet this time of year in Region 3. The only thing happening is the annual renewals.

As of this writing 6 of 14 Teams have completed their annual renewals. As of February 1, any renewals not postmarked prior will be considered late and will require the requisite \$20 late fee when renewing.

Since you last heard from me, I have appointed a new Assistant Director, Joe Zych of Star Mountain REACT in Etowah, Tenn. Joe has been assisting me with maintaining contact with all of you as well as helping out with the weekly REACT Net via Echo-link.

The yearly annual board meeting is quickly approaching on February 25 & 26, being held this year at the Mandalay Bay Resort in Las Vegas, Nev. I have already confirmed all my reservations and will be in attendance, so if anyone has anything that they wish to be brought before the Board of Directors at this meeting, please email me prior to the meeting at r.drury@reactintl.org.

I wish to thank all of you for your support over the last 3 years of my term and it has been an honor serving your interests with the Board of Directors.

More from your directors on pages 04 & 05 ▶



REGION 7

Charles D. Land *Region 7 Director*

We have a few teams reporting their activities:

Dallas County REACT reports that one of their biggest events of the year was a non-event. The Dallas Mayor's Race was canceled due to bad weather.

Travis County REACT was extremely active in the Austin Trail of Lights. The Trail of Lights was started over 30 years ago and has grown into a huge local event, attracting as many as 25,000 attendees each night for about 12 nights who walk a one mile park road and look at 35 elaborately lighted displays, listen to music on two stages and enjoy a huge array of food options from over 30 food trailers. Admission is free to the public.

REACT provided about 60 commercial radios per night for display monitors and other volunteers. REACT volunteers train the nightly volunteers in the use of two way radios – "This is the release to listen button" is a common training phrase. REACT team members serve as "trail captains" – supervising 5-10 trail monitors and assisting them with problems. Their presence discourages both accidental and intentional vandalism, provides immediate reporting of "lights out," etc. and assists attendees with problems.

"Lost kids" are the most frequent issue, as the kiddos and parents get separated in the midst of huge crowds. This year, all were reunited quickly and safely. All that it takes is watching a tearful Mom get reunited with a small child to understand why REACT is there.

Travis County REACT, with about 15 members, maintains an inventory of over 100 commercial HT radios and supports many very large events in Central Texas. Travis County REACT has been busy during 2013 modernizing its radio inventory to comply with FCC "narrowbanding" requirements.

Hill Country REACT, serving in and around San Antonio, Tex. continues to support

many area events. Our team members organize and/or support horseback riding events, marathons, parades, and other civic events.

Most recently, team members organized radio support for a 100k ultra marathon/trail run in the Hill Country State Natural Area. About 800 runners participated, with about 300 competing in the 100k portion of the race. Trail running is a rapidly growing facet of the running sport. They much prefer single track trails to roads, and the rougher the up and down hills, the happier they are. Some of these trails almost require being on all fours to go up, and rock hopping to come down – over a 24 hour period- yes, running up and down rocky hillsides in the dark.

This year temperatures were about 70 during the day and below 30 at night. You'd think that a group this crazy would suffer a lot of injuries. We have horse patrols on the course to observe. We always get some hypothermia problems, dehydration problems, and some road rash. The serious injuries that we watch for are rare.

A packet radio operation has been developed that allows tracking of runners at the various check points so that race officials know how many runners are on what portion of the course. It also gives tracking info if a runner is off course or way off time, and can provide information to family and friends as to the runner's location. In an area where cell phone coverage is largely non-existent, this is an important part of the operation. Radio operators also support the break points, relaying supply needs, volunteer status, runner medical needs, etc.

Hill Country REACT is trying to make the leap to the digital age, developing applications over Amateur packet radio to provide real time information that serves multiple needs. If any other teams are being innovative with the use of packet radio, contact charlesdland@gmail.com or Louis Upton, k5stx@k5stx.net. We'd love to trade ideas and developments.

Hill Country REACT members also organized radio support for an Ultra marathon in Big Bend National Park. This is one of the rare times that event organizers are permitted to hold an event of this nature

in a national park.

325 runners "hit the trails" running 50, 25 or 10K races. This park is one of the most remote and isolated areas of the country. This is desert county, and every plant has thorns, spines or stickers. The nearest Wal-Mart is over 200 miles away, and when LifeFlight responds to a medical incident, they have to negotiate several refueling stops along the way. The only use for cell phones is to take pictures.

The Park Service rangers (who are all medically trained), the Border Patrol and several volunteers provide medical support. This year there were only a few minor medical issues – dehydration and scrapes from falling over rocks, etc.

We are excited that this venue has been chosen as a development site for a MESH network (for more info on this, visit: www.broadbandhamnet.org). Recognizing that Wi-Fi channels 1-6 are also in the ham bands, developers have rewritten the OS for selected routers and added radio amplifiers that can achieve hops of 10 miles, compared to the few hundred feet of commercial grade Wi-Fi. This allows a 10 mbps connection between nodes, and allows closed circuit video and/or other high bandwidth applications. For the Big Bend marathon, this technology is used for a closed circuit video of the finish line to be viewed at Race HQ.

One of the most delightful events is the Christmas Parade in Sattler, a small town outside of San Antonio. Everyone in town is either in the parade or watching it. REACT runs the forming area for the 60 or so entries, marking off starting locations and directing floats to the proper place in line. Here we also help with getting the kiddos on the floats to the Portalet so that they don't have "emergencies" during the parade, communicating with the ground control for the Commemorative Air Force flyover, communicating with the Sheriff department about street closures, and getting an accurate entry list and script to the announcers.

There is the usual Santa at the end of the parade, and REACT is charged with assuring that there are no "unauthorized" Santas – otherwise it is just way too hard to try to explain to the little ones why there are multiple Santas!

REGION 9

Robby Goswami *Region 9 Director*

Region 9 represents essentially the “rest of the world,” that is, territories outside of the United States. Given the wide geographic area, this represents an opportunity for expansion of the REACT brand.

The series of activities planned for 2014 include:

1. Emphasis on training and development

Certification provides legitimacy for REACT members to successfully interface and integrate with service organizations, many of whom require assurances of capabilities. Training is also a means to create value in the minds of prospective members. Specifically, this will be achieved by providing access to the FEMA-NIMS/ICS training/certification and encouragement to pursue REACT’s EComm online certification which is expected to be available within the year.

2. Promotion of the REACT brand

A business development approach will be undertaken to encourage full team renewals, reinstatement of former teams, establishment of new teams in existing territories, new teams in previously uncharted territories and Councils for areas that may warrant such a structure. This will be achieved via outreach activities, social media contacts and site visits. Special attention will be paid to avoid territorial or jurisdictional conflicts.

3. Strengthening the governance, administration and communication with the served territories

Appointment of at least one Assistant Regional Director in each significant sub-region, similarly to what currently pertains in Canada and Trinidad.

4. Focus on and promotion of the distinctive capabilities

Each sub-region and team may possess a unique value-added capability which defines them. Creating an awareness of the niche areas along with success stories and the “how-to” documentation will assist in the process of sharing best practices and understanding of the culture.



5. Providing an avenue for each sub-region to have an active voice in the operations of REACT International

Initially this will be done by encouraging further participation in the online Board Meetings, the REACT Net and submitting articles for *the REACTer* magazine.

6. Recognition of excellence

While volunteers do not provide their effort contingent on receiving any specific reward, encouragement and motivation can result when special efforts are formally acknowledged. Awards and meritorious mention opportunities shall be pursued, along with the lobby for issuance of formal recognition.

7. Human capital development

A renewed effort toward youth development and revitalizing the Junior REACT arm. This will serve to provide an injection of members that will become the leaders of tomorrow. Association with schools and colleges/universities will be encouraged as a mechanism for recruitment.

8. Technology diffusion

Technology becomes the tools of the trade to deliver the product or service which REACT provides to its served publics. Amateur Radio capability greatly enhances the toolkit available for deployment, particularly in disaster or emergency preparedness activities. An outreach program will be undertaken to further encourage HAM classes and test taking. ■

snapshot



REACT Scene Lighting Unit illuminating a riverbank winter rescue effort in New Hamburg, Ontario.

Photo Courtesy of Waterloo Regional REACT

membership corner



GAVIN'S FIRST JOB

Russ Dunn *President*
Valley Wide REACT

It was a hot summer day in the Windy City, the home of REACT International. Eight year old Gavin was flying out for the first time by himself for a trip out West to see Grandma and Grandpa. He was coming for an entire month to spend time with his grandparents and his 3 cousins in Idaho's capital city of Boise.

Later in the week, Volunteer Valley Wide REACT member Michael Hyde (Grandpa) was pondering how he could work the upcoming team event. It was the July 4 Parade. But he was now entertaining his grandson, Gavin.

Mike began formulating a plan where he could entertain his grandson **AND** assist with traffic control for the parade and activities of the day for the 4th of July celebration.

At the team briefing with the Boise Police Department Sergeant

Christensen, Mike chose an assignment which would fit his plan. He chose the exit point of a downtown garage. The parade blocked the street's regular exit route. On this day, and only for a short time, traffic would go the wrong way on the one way street. Barricades closed the street to regular traffic. This alternate route was well marked for motorists.

The Hyde family deployed to the assigned location. Grandpa reached into his magic bag of tricks. He retrieved his handheld VHF amateur radio, two Family Radio Service radios, two safety vests, and two lighted, red traffic wands and a whistle.

Gavin walked beside Grandpa from the vehicle to the parking garage. He asked why Grandpa had TWO lights and THREE radios. Grandpa then told Gavin that the plan was to help facilitate the parade and that Gavin was included in the plan. Two of his three cousins immediately decided that they had to be included in these plans, but Grandma made sure that the younger cousins understood that this was a very important job that only Gavin could handle. Gavin oohed and awed as he cycled through the on/ flashing/off modes. He talked on one of the FRS radios. But enough playing, it was time to serve the public.

"Grandpa, I thought my first job would be at McDonald's..."

Gavin's post was near the parking garage. After receiving specific instruction and encouragement from the police patrol officer, Gavin used the traffic wand to direct the traffic toward Grandpa, at the end of the block. Grandma stayed far enough

away to have Gavin think that he was in charge, but she kept an eye on him so we didn't have a liability factor. The other cousins watched the parade enviously from their location.

The event went smoothly. Grandpa gave Gavin ten dollars for helping.

During the debriefing with the police officials, Gavin had time to think. Wow, he actually helped the Boise Police today. He was so excited to be with Grandpa and be working in public safety.

As they climbed back into the Suburban, Gavin turned and said, "Grandpa, I thought my first job would be at McDonald's. But it was helping the Boise police. Can I help every time I come back to visit you?"

Later that evening was the fireworks show. So the pair worked together on a second event. It went past dark, which was 10 PM. Again the officers were so supportive. Gavin was thrilled to converse with them. They gave him a great deal of encouragement. They even promised to make him a junior police officer for Boise Police.

And that is how Grandpa accomplished two goals simultaneously, **twice**: spending quality time with his grandson, and inspiring the next generation for public service.

Gavin decided that he wanted to be an amateur radio operator, just like Grandpa. He hasn't passed the test yet, but he still talks about coming back to do that.

And when he got back to Chicago, Gavin couldn't stop talking about the fact that now he didn't have to work at McDonalds for his first job! ■



Photo taken by Bekah Reist

HOW IS WINTER AFFECTING YOU?

"In Tennessee, we were busy during the cold winter blast with 5 inches of snow by surprise. The National Weather Service left us hanging and did not issue any warnings at all... Our team went into action with our practiced band plan to keep communication going between all of our team members.

Our team was able to perform a lot of radio traffic [with] messages to home that the drivers were delayed or stranded. There were 3 people that were stuck in the snow and one of our team members had a 4 wheel drive and was able to assist the drivers.

It is a good feeling to be able help out in your community and help people in need and that is why we are members of REACT."

▲ **Joe** Star Mountain REACT Radio Club

"Regarding this severe Winter that we are presently enduring, I can say that [Lake County] REACT has spent little time with any winter associated emer-

gencies that usually accompany snow, ice, and freezing temperatures.

We have been out once looking for a missing person in cold temperatures this year. We do have members that deliver or work with the "Meals on Wheels" Program on a daily basis, provide traffic patrol in the school crosswalks daily here in Madison, and are on call for any emergency where our services could be utilized!"

▲ **Dale** Lake County REACT

"Well, fortunately we in California have not seen the cold weather that the eastern half of the country has seen. We are experiencing a relatively warm winter and need the rain!"

▲ **Phil** Blackberry REACT

"...we, in our family, are lucky. We updated our house with insulation and a very efficient heating system about five years ago, and it is paying off right now. Our only problem is that we have

an 1880's farmhouse and our downstairs bathroom/laundry room has pipes in the walls that freeze unless we dribble them constantly during the cold weather. We know what temperatures and weather conditions are problematic for us, and we know how to respond appropriately."

▲ **Bill**

"Since I live in "Paradise," cold, nasty, inclement weather isn't a major problem here. The worst we get is a hurricane from time to time. We are overdue for one by about 11 years (Eva was in 1982 and Iniki was in 1992 so we're on 'borrowed time'."

▲ **Rob** Honolulu REACT Team

"...I live in Trinidad and [the] snow with its storms and really bad weather never affects us. Our country has sun and rain and our bad times are June-November when the hurricane season starts, that's when our problems arise."

▲ **Anjo**

ECHOLINK & THE REACT INFORMATION NET

Robby Goswami 9Z4RG/AK4NB
Region 9 Director

EchoLink is a free internet-based Windows software application which allows licensed Amateur Radio (HAM) radio operators to connect to each other. This connection may take the following forms, or a combination thereof:

- Computer-to-Computer
- Computer-to-Repeater
- Repeater-to-Repeater

The software is relatively easy to set up and use of the interface is quite intuitive.

The linking made possible using the Internet extends the range of mobile and portable stations to distant systems across the globe.

For instance, it is possible for someone with a hand-held radio to connect to a local repeater in Miami, Fla. to speak with a mobile operator located in Los Angeles, Calif.

It is possible for someone without a radio to connect to a distant repeater and carry out a QSO (conversation) by using their computer microphone and speaker.

REACT International, Inc., recognizing the possibilities to conduct a “wide area” global network started the World-wide REACT Information Net in 2010.

The net takes place via EchoLink REACT conference server node 109779 every Saturday night at 9 P.M. EST and averages about 30 minutes in duration. It is a great opportunity to exchange information on REACT activities and to hear from different teams around the world. The net is not limited to REACT members and is opened to all amateurs anywhere.

The net control is Jay Flora (WA4JAY) from Cleveland County REACT, assisted by Joe Zych (KD4YSH) of Star Mountain REACT.

Spread the word and hope to see you on the next edition of the net!

For detailed information on downloading, verifying your license and installing the software, visit:

www.echolink.org

Every Saturday @ 9 P.M. EST 



in memory

B.F. "Frank" Jennings, USN (Ret.)

1926-2014

REACT International, Inc., regrets to announce the passing of Benjamin Francis "Frank" Jennings, RI Life Member 20, at approximately 5 p.m., Monday, 13 January 2014, at the Harrison Hospital in Bremerton, Washington. Born 9 September 1926, Frank was 87 years old.

Frank was retired from the US Navy with the rank of Lieutenant Commander. He originally enlisted in the Navy in 1943, was commissioned in 1960 through the Navy's limited duty officer program, and retired in 1973. He served in World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War and received numerous awards and decorations throughout his career.

In 2012, Frank participated in the Honor Flight program which takes WWII veterans to Washington, D.C., to visit the World War II memorial. His son Mike Jennings accompanied him. While there, they had the opportunity to have a photo-op with Elizabeth Dole and her husband, Robert Dole (himself a wounded veteran of WWII). Ms. Dole and Frank had previously met at a REACT Convention when she was Secretary of Transportation. Ms. Dole also served as Secretary of Labor, President of the American Red Cross, and US Senator (R- N.C.). Mr. Dole was also a US Senator (R-Kans.), as well as a candidate for Vice President two times and a candidate for President once.

Frank developed his first interest in radio communications in 1947, while stationed on Saipan in the Pacific. He had heard of an amateur radio operator who was able to use radio to span the Pacific, and then with the use of long distance telephone, allow servicemen to talk to their families. He convinced the command's chief radio petty officer to allow use of the radio facilities for this purpose. With the approval of the commanding officer, both Army and Navy units contributed to the expansion of the facilities, and soldiers and sailors from local units began to take interest and participate in the program. Later the Armed Forces developed the Military Affiliate Radio



System (MARS) worldwide, perhaps as a result of the program in Saipan.

Frank was a licensed amateur radio operator (K7LTR, Technician) and was licensed in the General Mobile Radio Service (KAD9560). He was active in several REACT Teams over the years, and was a member of Rainier Radio REACT at the time of his death. He served as Chairman of the Board of Directors of REACT International from 2000 to 2003 and was a Director from 1999 to 2008. He also served for many years as the Chairman of the Life Membership Committee for REACT International.

He was instrumental in the 1998 reorganization of REACT International, serving on several committees which designed and implemented the new plan of governance. For his accomplishments, Frank was awarded the Eugene Goebel Award (REACT International's highest award) at the 2003 Convention in Evansville, Ind. He continued to serve REACT International until his death, attending the Annual Meetings of the Board of Directors each year, as well as Special Called electronic meetings, and advising the President on day-to-day matters.

Frank was predeceased by wives Florence and Lynn and is survived by three sons, Ben, Mike (Annie), and Doug (Caryn), five grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren. His ashes will be laid to rest between his two wives.

A memorial service will possibly be held at a later date in the spring, according to the family. An announcement will be made when a time and place have been established. In the meantime, the family has asked that any contributions in Frank's memory be made to the Shriners Children's Hospital as he was a long-time member of the Shriners.

REACT International wishes Frank fair winds and following seas.

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watch live.

board meeting 2014

What: The Annual Board Meeting

Dates: February 25th & 26th*

Time: 8 A.M. to 5 P.M. PST (both days)*

This year the meeting will be broadcast live from the Mandalay Bay Resort in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Members can tune in to view and listen by following a link that will appear on REACT International's website between 8 A.M. and 5 P.M. PST* on event day.

(*may be subject to change)

Be sure to visit:

www.reactintl.org

your board of directors

All members of the Board of Directors of REACT International, Inc. are members of a local REACT team in their respective areas and volunteer time to fulfill the duties of their respective positions. The positions of Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Board are elected annually by vote of the Regional Directors in office. The President is an ex-officio member of the Board of Directors. All Regional Directors are elected by teams in their respective regions every three years. Candidates for Regional Director positions must be a member of a team in the region that they wish to serve and must have been a member for three years or more.

DIRECTORS 2014

Warren Deitz *New York*
 Region 1 Director
 ME, VT, NH, MA, CT, RI, NY, PA
w.deitz@reactintl.org
 (845) 319-2035
 AA2YQ

Roy Drury *Florida*
 Region 3 Director
 NC, TN, SC, MS, AL, GA, FL, PR
r.drury@reactintl.org
 (813) 473-2280
 K4DCT

Laurence Fry *Wisconsin*
 Region 5 Director
 ND, SD, NE, MN, IA, WI, IL
l.fry@reactintl.org
 (608) 752-4547
 K9FRY

Charlie Land *Texas*
 Vice Chairman of the Board
 Region 7 Director
 AR, LA, NM, CO, KS, MO, OK, TX
c.land@reactintl.org
 (210) 568-7092
 KC5NKK

Robby Goswami *Trinidad & Tobago*
 Region 9 Director
 International
r.goswami@reactintl.org
 (868) 682-2212
 9Z4RG/AK4NB

Tom Currie *Kentucky*
 Region 2 Director
 DE, NJ, MD, VA, KY, WV
t.currie@reactintl.org
 (502) 935-5113
 N4AOF

Open
 Region 4 Director
 MI, IN, OH
 visit: www.reactintl.org
 for information regarding
 the nominations process

Tom Jenkins *Idaho*
 Region 6 Director
 AK, HI, ID, MT, OR, WA, WY
t.jenkins@reactintl.org
 (775) 385-0242
 N7VOI

John Capodanno *California*
 President
 Chairman of the Board
 Region 8 Director
 CA, NV, UT, AZ
j.capodanno@reactintl.org
 (818) 974-0052
 KJ6QAJ

In 2014, Regions 3, 6 & 9 are up for election. For nominations info, visit: membership.reactintl.org



the **REACTer**

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REACT International, Inc. Headquarters:

REACT International, Inc.
P.O. Box 21064
Glendale, CA 91221-5164
(866) 732-2899 (US only)
(301) 316-2900 (International)

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